

**MEETING NOTES**  
**TASK GROUP #2 VEHICLE ACCESS**  
**VICTORVILLE, CALIFORNIA**  
**JANUARY 24, 2000**

**Stakeholder Group Members Present:** Anderson, Brown, Everly, Ferguson, Guzman, Johnson (Harold), Johnson (Jim), Kober, Landowski, Miller, Pickard, Rains, Read, Rudnick, Waldheim, Wash, Wilson

**Staff Present:** Diggins, LaPre, LaRue, Knaster, Rempel

**Agenda Item #1 Presentation by BLM on an Approach for Considering Routes in the West Mojave Plan**

As agreed upon by the Task group at the November meeting, BLM staff presented a proposal for route designation in the West Mojave Plan. Staff first provided a generic discussion of the overall protocol/approach utilized in developing their proposal and then focused on the El Paso Mountains polygon as an illustration of how the approach had been applied on the ground.

BLM staff began by assembling data from several sources in order to identify the raw network, or “inventory,” of vehicle routes. This was accomplished by a team of BLM and contract photogrammetrists, who digitized vehicle routes identified on high-resolution aerial photography taken in the mid-1990's. A staff team with expertise in biological/habitat issues, recreation management, law enforcement, and GIS then reviewed the inventory and applied a series of screens for deciding which routes to close and which to keep open. A list of those screens was provided to the task group in the form of an “Access and Resource Attributes” handouts. Routes had been evaluated against the list of 23 attributes.

The screens applied to the route network included:

- 1) Recreational interest criteria
  - provide loops and connecting routes
  - access to scenic or cultural sites
  - multi-use routes
  - access for commercial recreational users (jeep tours..)
  - connection to other polygons
  - ensure geographic access of not more than 1 mile to all points in the plan area
- 2) Provide routes for other commercial uses and private land access
- 3) Minimize or prohibit access to biologically sensitive areas; minimum setbacks
- 4) Eliminate routes in areas with potential for severe erosion damage
- 5) Eliminate routes that have undesirable visual characteristics (e.g. near highways)
- 6) Account for redundancy
- 7) Ensure access to cultural sites

Task group members raised a number of questions about how criteria were applied in designating routes as open or closed. A number of members also indicated significant concerns that the presentation by staff constituted decisions already made by BLM rather than a strawman proposal for the group to consider. They expressed frustration at having to try to re-interpret how the criteria were applied rather than jointly developing criteria and jointly applying them. The facilitation team reminded the group that this approach had been agreed upon and that the group knew in advance that BLM would bring a proposal. The question that needed to be addressed was how best for the group to evaluate the proposal both for this polygon and the rest of the routes.

Below is a summary of the questions and concerns raised in response to the proposal:

- How were the public/recreational criteria applied? Several members stressed that the recreational value of routes in the inventory are typically determined by their existence and that routes should be closed only for resource reasons.
- Where do presently designated Wilderness areas fit into the accounting with respect to the amount of habitat that is protected?
- Plan needs to include an option for future changes to route designations
- Clarification of the term “limited access” and how it can be applied
- Can the number of proposed closures be enforced?
- How many of the routes included in the total inventory are non-routes e.g. ridges, or washes appearing on satellite maps as routes. Can the group have a more accurate picture of the actual quantity of routes that are being proposed for closure?

BLM also presented a set of “sideboards” that the agency indicated must guide the route designation process. Four of the key sideboards included:

- 1) minimize environmental impacts (soil, watershed, air..)
- 2) minimize harassment of wildlife or disruption to wildlife habitats
- 3) minimize conflicts between off-road vehicle use and other existing or proposed recreational uses; also account for compatibility with conditions in populated areas
- 4) no trails in officially designated wilderness or primitive areas

Members noted that the sideboards were workable as criteria to apply, but reiterated problems with how they are applied and by whom. It was agreed that other criteria could be added as long as the four key sideboards were adhered to in the final Plan. Members also discussed the BLM proposal for route designations. BLM emphasized that BLM policy requires that all routes be designated as open, closed or limited. Recreational interest group members re-iterated their preference for “encouraged, prohibited and allowed”.

There still was some confusion about “limited” routes and where these exist, but the group agreed to postpone discussion of this designation to focus on more critical distinctions.

### **Agenda Item #2 Next Steps**

The Task Group was unable to complete its objectives for the meeting because of the number of questions that could not be answered with respect to specific decision in the El Paso Mountains area and because of the overall philosophical differences expressed at the meeting on process and substance. However, in order to make progress on their difficult assignment, the Task Group appointed two sub groups. Participation was limited to 6-7 but will ensure that there is diverse representation of Supergroup interests. One group will meet at the Ridgecrest BLM office to revisit the El Paso Mountains polygon; a tentative date of February 22, 2000 was set. The second group will meet in Barstow to look at the Newberry Polygon (and Ord-Rodman since it is about to go out for public comment); a tentative date of February 10, 2000 was set.

Volunteers included:

El Paso: Conner, Ferguson, Kober, LaPre, Rains, Waldheim, Wilson

Newberry: Anderson, Ferguson, Guzman, Kober, Landowski, LaRue, Miller, Walheim

BLM will provide detailed maps for each region and include the “access” and “resource” attribute codes that were applied to each route. Staff will be available to walk through examples of how the multi-disciplinary group arrived at its proposals. Each subgroup will begin with a few examples and then decide on an approach for developing a complete proposal on its assigned polygon to be submitted to the full Task Group.

The next full Task Group will meet on March 7<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 a.m. in Victorville. The subgroups will present their suggestions at that time. The Task Group will then use the input from the subgroups in setting their process for completing its review of all of the polygons.